

Child migration and education in Ghana: The nexus and intricacies

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Abstract

The nexus between child migration and education is varied and complex. While some liken it to an end to the ambitions of migrant children, evidence is emerging to support the contrary. In less developed countries as Ghana, many children migrate to accumulate wealth to finance their education or access well-resourced schools at urban destinations. This would not have been possible if they stayed in their rural deprived origins. However, the intricacies of the nexus are yet to be clearly and deeply understood. In this paper, the linkages between migration and the education of children are explored using in-depth interviews with 35 migrant children in Accra and Bongo district. Some of these children migrated during school holidays and returned to continue schooling when schools reopen. Whereas the linkages were mostly negative for children who could no longer continue schooling, it was observed to be positive for others who were fortunate to access well-resourced schools at their destinations. Moreover, effects were mixed for a third category who, although could no longer continue with their education, were nonetheless pursuing other opportunities of skills acquisition through apprenticeship. Therefore, more targeted efforts and strategies are needed to ensure that children who migrate do not lose out of formal education while improving the socio-economic push conditions at their sending communities.

Keywords: child migration, education, nexus, intricacies, schooling

1. Introduction

In recent times, more children in Ghana have access to basic education and are entering upper secondary education than at any time in the history of the country (Darvas and Belwanz, 2014). However, there are still over 300,000 school-aged children who are not in school (p.xi) for various reasons, including migration. The inclusive education policy in Ghana identifies 20 categories of children with disabilities to include those displaced by natural catastrophes and social conflicts, nomadic children, children living in extreme social and economic deprivation, children exploited for financial purpose, orphans and children who are not living with their biological parents, and street children (MoE, 2015). Children who migrate independent of their parents are exposed to challenges that are likely to affect their education in various ways. Therefore, understanding the intricate nexuses between child migration and education is a daunting task in the discourse on the phenomenon of child migration. Not only are there many confounding factors, but the effects appear blur and complex to isolate. For instance, poverty has been observed as the main impediment to the inability of children to attend school (Ray, 2000; Tzannatos, 2003). This appears to influence the focus of more attention, over the years, on children working at their destinations, which is often considered as child labour with education regarded as the key means by which children can be disengaged from the perceived child work (Ravioli and Wodon, 1999; Burns et al, 2003). The concern in this regard has often been that, child work is incompatible with education. This could be attributed to the perception that work and education are binary opposites and that work and education are mutually exclusive (Hashim, 2007). In other words, children are not supposed to combine work with schooling. This orientation could be traced to the situation in Western Europe and America during the nineteenth century, as a result of economic, social and political transformations which institutionalized childhood as a category separate from adulthood (Davin, 1996; Morrow, 1996, cited in Hashim, 2007) such that the rightful place of children is the school. However, migration of children for or child work in general, has been argued not to be incompatible with children's education and their livelihood (Bourdillon, 2006). This is because, some children migrate to escape poverty and for livelihood, accumulate wealth to support themselves and their families (Tamanja, 2012). Therefore, staying in their origin communities, ridden with poverty and lack of resources, has the tendency to deprive children from accessing education as poor parents are unable to meet the miscellaneous costs of education. Thus, migrating to urban destinations offers the opportunity for children to work and accumulate wealth to meet the miscellaneous cost of education, either at the destinations or return to

their origin communities to continue schooling.

In Ghana, the government recognises this challenge of poverty and has attempted to address it with initiatives such as free, compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE), capitation grant, school feeding programme, free school uniforms, among others (Akyeampong 2009; Davas and Balwanz, 2014). These initiatives have however proven to be inadequate for children from very poor families and deprived areas (Akyeampong 2009). Nevertheless, the quest for education is high among parents and children as most parents (65%) in Ghana (if they had the choice) would prefer their children to either be in school or in training while most children (88%) would also prefer to go to school and complete their education (de Lange, 2007). Furthermore, education is a human right that is basic to personal and societal well-being. As such, obtaining formal education is one of the fundamental elements in the process of transition from childhood to adulthood and enhances an individual's potential contribution to national development (UNICEF, 2009). Therefore, many children of school going age in deprived areas of Ghana migrate to urban destinations for various reasons, including pursuant of education. However, both migrant and non-migrant children need formal education to enhance their future potential contributions to national development. Thus, efforts at providing quality education for all children is *sine qua non* as children hold the key to the future development of any nation. However, there is limited empirical evidence on the linkage between child migration and education, especially when child migrants are engaged in economic activities. This study seeks to contribute to fill this gap by exploring the nexus between child migration and education in Ghana, to help deepen the understanding and minimise the misconceptions about the phenomenon of child migration.

2. The discourse

Available literature on migration of children does not provide reliable data on the number of children involved in migration or its effects on their well-being and education (Whitehead and Hashim, 2005; Hashim, 2007). However, this linkage appears to be complex and also specific to the context within which migration occurs. Nonetheless, the nexus between education and migration presents what can be considered complex and intricate relationships. Whereas some observe a negative relationship (Beals et al, 1976), others report a positive relationship (Ackah and Medvedev, 2010) while some others (Hashim, 2007) argue for both positive and negative relationships between child migration and education.

When school children migrate, the likelihood of them abandoning their education presents a worrying reality. The effect of migration on education of children could be negative particularly when they become victims of urban unemployment and school drop-outs (Anarfi, 1993; Piesse, 2003). In a study of migrant children in India by Rao (2009), children from poorer and working class families, from lower castes and tribes, consistently under achieved at every level of the educational system compared to middle and upper class children, with many of the poor and low class families involved in migration. Also, a study of internal migration in Ghana observed that migrants are more likely to stop their school education when they migrate (Ackah and Medvedev, 2010). Accordingly, the primary motivation for Ghanaian migrants is to find work, mainly in the manufacturing sector or in sales, with education being a secondary consideration. Although the study focused on adult migrants, it identified factors ranging from language, school cost, differences in curriculum, and attitudes toward migrants as compelling migrants to abandon school education. For instance, although English is the official language in Ghana, there are about 68 other languages spoken across the length and breadth of the country, with eleven (11) selected and used as medium of instruction at the basic level of education. These selected languages include: Fante, Asante Twi, Akwapim Twi, Ga, Dangme, Nzema, Ewe, Dabani, Gonja, Dagaare and Kassem (Owu-Ewie, 2006) and reflect their spatial distribution, use and dominance in the country. Consequently, schools located within a language area use the selected language as medium of instruction alongside English language. Local language is used as the medium of instruction while English Language is taught as a subject at the lower primary level (P1-3/Grade 1-3) and then a switch is made from grade 4 onwards, where English becomes the medium of instruction and the Local language taught as a subject (MOESS, 2006). Therefore, children who migrate to areas where the local language of instruction is different from that of their origin (mother tongue) are disadvantaged, which could result in such children not doing well in class.

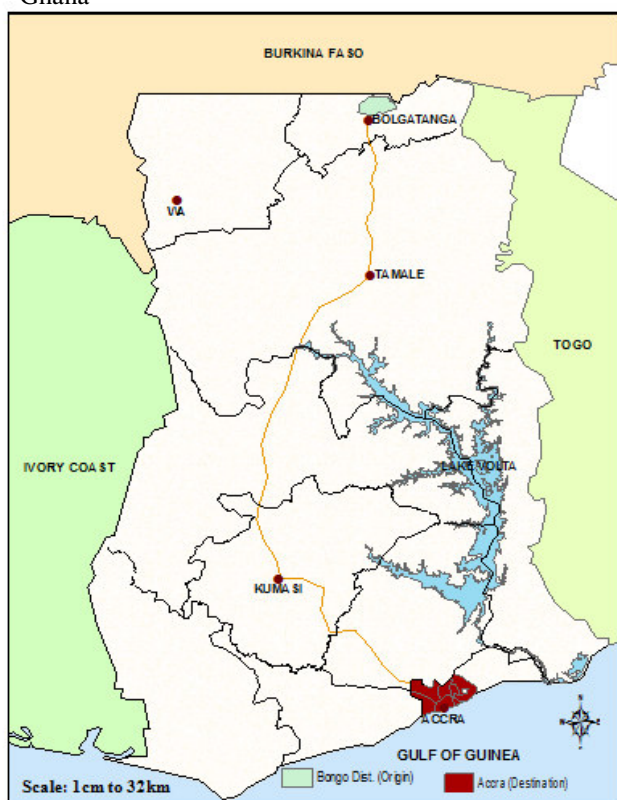
Furthermore, as part of the efforts at achieving the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), basic education in Ghana is free under the Free, Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) programme which was introduced in 1996, following educational reforms in 1987 (GES, 2004). However, after two decades (1996 - 2016) of implementation, the fCUBE programme is yet to achieve its objectives, as there

are still about 20% of children who are not in school (UNICEF, 2010; GSS, 2008) while parents complain of high school cost. Cost arising from miscellaneous necessities, such as school equipment, extra teachers and teaching, school uniforms and exercise books are borne by parents (Hashim, 2007). Moreover, whereas basic education has been free in the north of the country, since independence, the same is not the case in other parts of the country. Migrant children and also parents, who are unable to meet such school costs at their destinations are not able to access or continue with their education.

On the other hand, involvement of children in migration does not always mean an end to their educational dreams, but could also be a turning point for access to better resourced schools than those in their places of origin, or an opportunity to afford some school cost which would otherwise not have been possible. A study on migration and education linkages in India and Bangladesh observed that children migrate in order to pursue formal education or vocational training (Sward and Rao, 2008), especially when schools in their localities are perceived to be poor and under resourced. Children therefore migrate as a means of escaping such unfavourable conditions to places where the conditions are favourable. In a study involving 70 child migrants in Ghana, Hashim found a strong linkage between migration and education and categorised them into three related categories. These include children entering into fostering arrangement in order to ensure continuous access to education or better education, seeking an apprenticeship opportunity through migration and where children travel to secure resources to continue or complete their education (Hashim, 2007). In any of these instances, children migrated from the Upper East region, where educational opportunities are limited, to destinations in the south with better opportunities and quality of education. This positive linkage reflects in the reasons why children migrate, as 16% of the 70 child migrants in the study admitted they migrated for the purpose of education. Education as the primary motivation for migration also accounted for 16.5 percent of adult migrants in Ghana (Ackah and Medvedev, 2010).

Furthermore, although opportunities for education and vocational training may be present in some rural settings, they are often not effective and children are often motivated to migrate to access better schools and training facilities for non-farm occupations and/or to acquire money to cover their costs (Hashim and Thorsen, 2011). It is therefore worthy of note, that the relationship between child migration and education is complex and influences each other in both positive and negative ways. However, the extent of the influence is dependent on the nature and structure of education (Giani, 2006; Punch, 2007). Children lose out when the structure is rigid whereas a flexible structure accommodates the peculiarity of migrant children and therefore benefit all children.

Figure 1 Origin and destination of child migrants in Ghana



Source: Tamanja (2016)

3. Locational context of the study

This study was conducted in two administrative districts in Ghana: Accra in the coastal ecological zone and Bongo district in the northern savanna zone. Accra (the National Capital) is a popular destination for most migrants in Ghana (Anarfi et. al, 2003; GSS, 2013), while Bongo district is the origin of many migrants (BONDA, 2010, 2012; Mohammed and Apusigah, 2005; Tamanja, 2012). In order to get a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of child migration, migrant children were interviewed in Accra and also at their home villages in Bongo district. Figure 1 shows the destination (Accra) and origin (Bongo district) of the study.

Bongo District, with a population of 84,545 (47.4% males and 52.2% females) inhabitants, is one of thirteen (13) districts and municipalities in the Upper East region. Covering an area of 459.5 km², The district shares boundaries with Burkina Faso to the north, Kassena-Nankana East to the west, Bolgatanga Municipality to the south west and Nabdram district to south east (GSS, 2014). About 40% of the land surface is occupied by rocks (BONDA, 2010), reducing the

land available for farming activities, which are predominantly subsistent and rain-fed, with small land holding and animal husbandry. The high density presents huge challenges to subsistence compound farming and household poverty (Tamanja, 2014). The only irrigation facility at Ve a (Ve a Irrigation Dam) is no longer operational as in the past. These figures and conditions have implications for household poverty and migration since most inhabitants are engaged in subsistence agriculture as the main economic activity.

The social organisation of inhabitants of the district is mainly the patrilineal and extended family system (Hart, 1971), with many members living in common compounds in different household units. This enjoins them to engage in communal social activities and farming, helping one another in times of distress (Hashim and Thorsen, 2011). Although the population is mostly youthful (42.7%), with a growth rate of 2.8%, and mostly rural (49%), education in the district is bedeviled with serious challenges, including inadequate teachers, furniture, teaching and learning materials, resulting in poor academic performance in schools. The poor performance and other conditions constitute a disincentive for children to attend school, as schooling is perceived as waste of time. Consequently, migration among school-aged children is common in the district. Although there are no official statistics on the phenomenon, it involves adults (regardless of their marital status) and children, some of whom attend school but migrate during vacation to work and return when schools reopen (BONDA, 2010; Tamanja, 2012 & 2014).

On the other hand, Accra (see figure 1) is the national capital of Ghana with a land size of 200 km² and a population of about 1.8 million (48% males and 52% females) in 2010, constituting 7.5% of the country's total population of 24.6 million (GSS, 2013). The metropolis has the highest density of about 9,243 persons per square kilometre as against the national density of 103.4. This high density has implications for livelihoods, as dependence on the land (as is the case with many rural areas) cannot sustain the population. It is therefore not surprising that sales and general work constitute the major occupations within the metropolitan area of Accra (GSS, 2013).

The concentration of population, commercial and industrial activities in the metropolis places mounting pressure on the limited infrastructure and services including housing, transport, water supply, sanitation and waste disposal. While the city of Accra continues to grow rapidly, its boundaries are not clearly demarcated, a situation which poses problems for the planning and management of the city and results in the formation of slums which accommodate migrants from the hinterlands. The commercial activities and centres offer ready employment for migrants, especially children from the northern part of the country who ply their trade in these centres. Even though the Children's Act of 1998 prohibits children under 13 years old from doing any work for pay or profit, many of these children who do 'any work for pay or profit' are found in the metropolis and work as head porters, serve in food and drinking joints (popularly called chop bars), and as house helps. Accra therefore serves as a magnet that attracts children from the Northern Savannah region who migrate with the hope of achieving their life goals.

4. Methodology

This study is mainly qualitative and employed the exploratory approach involving narrations of children in Accra who migrated from Bongo district in the Upper East region of Ghana. The choice of this approach was to give children the voice to share their individual experiences on how their involvement in migration affected their education. The narrative approach helped to elicit and analyse sensitive information from respondents as they provided accounts (usually in the form of stories) about themselves or events that affect them in their lives and surroundings (Bryman, 2012). This was done through in-depth interviews with migrant children at their destinations. The children shared their experiences in a more relaxed, open and frank manner which enabled me to gain crucial insights into their lives (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009).

Furthermore, migrant children were observed in their natural environments (places of abode and work) to help deepen the contextual understanding on the issue of child migration and to see and report what they said they did during interviews (Gans, 1999). Therefore, the qualitative approach was considered appropriate since it enables seeing the social world and the events that take place in it through the eyes of the researched. It allows for the gathering of detailed accounts of actions that occur in the setting being explored and provides ready evidence of change and flux (Bryman, 2012). It also seeks the discovery of relationships between variables, enables comparisons, makes for conclusions about the significance of certain factors for the relationships and establishes

integrated constructs (Agbesinyale, 2003). Furthermore, the qualitative approach is useful for going beyond the surface to the deeper issues about the nexus between child migration education.

4.1 Participants

Participants in this study included 35 child migrants consisting of 28 boys and 7 girls, aged 12 to 17 years old. Only 5 (3 boys and 2 girls) were schooling in Accra with 7 (5 boys and 2 girls) in schools in their home villages in Bongo district. On the other hand, 14 (9 boys and 5 girls) were no longer in school while 6 (5 boys and 1 girl) were on apprenticeship.

4.2 Procedure

Participants in this study were purposefully selected using the snowball technique. The first child migrant to be interviewed was identified through a trader and community leader from Bongo who resides in Accra. After interviewing this first child, he linked me to a colleague who also linked me with others through snowballing until the sample of 25 child migrants was obtained in Accra. Similarly, the child migrants in Accra introduced me to their colleagues who had returned after working in Accra to accumulate some money and return to continue schooling. They provided the telephone contacts of their counterparts and parents and suggested the people to contact for help in their home communities when a follow up was made to interview them. Snowballing is useful because of its ability to draw on children's own networks (Rapley, 2014) to select the required participants for the study. Data for this study was collected in two phases within a period of six months. The first in-depth interviews were conducted with migrant children between October and December 2011, mainly at their places of destination in Accra, while the second phase, which was from October to December 2012, comprised interviews in the Bongo district with children who had returned to continue their schooling. The interviews were conducted in homes and schools of child migrants, as and where it was convenient for them.

Also, the choice of migrant children from Bongo district was informed by the reason that it is one of the districts where migration is an important part of living and involves people of all ages: young and middle-aged, male and female (Mohammed and Apusigah, 2005). Every household in the district has someone who has migrated (BONDA, 2012), and Accra and other cities in the south of Ghana are their preferred destinations (Tamanja, 2012).

The interviews were conducted in English (mostly pidgin), Twi and Gurene (local languages), in accordance with the preferences of the participants. As I could not speak Gurene (the native dialect of the people of Bongo district), interviews in this language were interpreted by a trained local person whom I engaged for this purpose. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed, with those in Gurene translated into English by the interpreter.

4.3 Analysis

A thematic approach to data analysis was adopted, which involved categorising and organising data into themes and patterns as they emerged from the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data I analysed included in-depth interview transcripts, samples of children's profiles, dairies and field notes. Data from all interviews were analysed manually by making summaries of the narrations of the participants; supporting them with relevant quotations that captured their views; and augmenting the findings with data from field observations. The analysis of data primarily involved an iterative process of reading, reflecting and coding the interview transcripts, and then drawing out major and recurring themes. Individual accounts and responses to questions were carefully examined, the responses were categorised and themes derived from them.

As the study involved children, issues of ethics were given outmost consideration. Consent was sought from children, school authorities, parents and community leaders before they participated in the study. Besides the schools where written consent was sought at the local authority offices, participation of parents and village leaders was by verbal consent and at their own volition. All stages of their involvement were explained to them and they consented verbally before participating in the exercise. Furthermore, pseudo names are used in the presentation and quotations from interviews in this report. This is necessary in order to protect the identity of the participants, who are children. The data were subsequently presented in a table and discussed in accordance with the emerging themes (positive, negative and mixed effects) of child migration on their education.

5. Presentation and discussion of findings

Analysis of the data revealed that migration has different effects on the school education of children in Bongo district. The effects are categorized into negative, positive and mixed, depending on the context within which the migration was made and the category of children involved. These effects are presented in table 1.

Table 1 Effects of child migration on education

Location	Effects			Total
	Negative	Positive	Mixed	
Destination	12	8	5	25
Origin	2	7	1	10
Total	14	15	6	35

Source: Own illustration from field data

As can be seen in table 1, 14 children narrated that migration had negatively affected their school education. Of the 14 children, 12 were interviewed in Accra while 2 were interviewed in their home villages in Bongo district. Also, 15 child migrants interviewed narrated that migration had positive effects on their school education while 6 narrated that migration had mixed effects on their education. Out of the 35 children 25 and 10 were interviewed in Accra and villages in Bongo district respectively.

5.1 Negative effect of child migration on education

It emerged from responses of children that, those who migrated to do menial work in order to support themselves and their families back home, were unable to continue schooling. This category included 12 children (9 boys and 3 girls) who were interviewed in Accra and 2 (1 boy and 1 girl) in Bongo district. These 2 children migrated and returned to their home villages, but were no longer in school. Both children in this category narrated that migration had negative effects and ended their educational ambitions. The following narrations epitomises how migration negatively affects children's education. Attis (a 17 years old boy) who migrated to Accra after the death of his father, when he was 13 years old, admitted in an interview with the following response.

I don't think I can go to school again because there is no one to help. When I came here first, I was thinking I will get enough money quickly and then go back and continue with my school, but it is not so, and I cannot also continue the schooling here. But if I can get someone to help me and my family at home, I will still want to go to school. But as you know, that is not possible because I cannot forget of my mother and my siblings. I am the first born son of the family so I have to take care of them when they don't have. I can only say that, if it is possible, then we can help those still in school now because I don't think my help is enough for them. If someone can help, it will be better and I will also be free and save more for my own work in the future (Interview with Attis in Accra).

Similarly, a 17-year-old girl shared her experience in her home village in the following narration.

I was attending school here [home village], but things were not easy for me in school. I was in class five, but things were difficult for me here. So I travelled to Accra to work and get some money to come and be able to support my mother to take care of us or attend school in Accra. When I got there, I got some work to do but the money I was earning was small. I could not save some to bring and continue with my schooling here. It is very difficult to go to school in Accra because there was no one there to take care of me. I was on my own. Although I was living there with friends, also from this place, we were all hustling on her own. After two and a half years, I was ill and had to come back here to my mother. Now I am healed but cannot continue with my schooling since I don't have money and my mother too does not have and there is no one to help (interview with 17 years old girl, Akiiki, in Bongo district).

From these narrations, Attis and Akiiki were unable to continue with their school education. For them, migration meant an end to their educational ambitions, although they may still have dropped out (anyway) if they were at home, due to their peculiar household socio-economic circumstances. Both narrations are consistent with the findings of Ackah and Medvedev (2010) in a study of internal migration in Ghana, that migrants are more likely to stop their school education when they migrate. In the narration of Attis, his position as the first born male

child in a patrilineal family enjoins him with the responsibility to support his widowed mother and younger siblings. He therefore had to migrate to work in Accra, instead of pursuing his educational ambition. He initially thought it will be easy for him to work and get enough money and return to continue with his education, but it turned out on the contrary as he had to work in order to support his mother and siblings back home in the village. He was however praying and hoping for an opportunity (though unlikely) or any kind of support to cater for his siblings while he saved his meagre earnings for his own future. Similarly, Akiiki abandoned schooling and migrated to Accra with the intention of working to support her mother or attend school in Accra. Unfortunately, she could not continue schooling in Accra because there was no support and she did not also have the means to meet the cost of schooling in Accra and became a victim of urban unemployment (Anarfi, 1993; Piesse, 2003). She had to return to the village when she was ill and was home at the time of the interview. It is also an indication that the interventions by the government such as capitation grant, school feeding programme, free school uniforms, among others (Akyeampong 2009; Davas and Balwanz, 2014) are not adequate for migrant children to access schools at their destinations and as observed by Akyeampong (2009), such initiatives are inadequate for migrant children. Nevertheless, some children were positive about the effects of migration on their education.

5.2 Positive effect of child migration on education

Notwithstanding the negative effects that migration has on the school education of children in this study, some of the children interviewed expressed satisfaction with their involvement in migration. This category involved 15 children (12 boys and 3 girls) interviewed at the destination (8) and places of origin (7). This category admitted that their involvement in migration had positive effects on their education.

5.2.1 Positive effects at destination

Some children are fortunate to continue their education at the destinations when they migrate. Such children are privileged to live with adult relatives or non-relative guardians, who support them in their education at the destinations. Family and other networks are necessary to enable such children overcome the daunting challenges of combining migration with schooling. The 8 children (7 boys and 1 girl) who were in this category include children who were in schools and those who had completed their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and were preparing to progress to the Senior High School (SHS) at their destinations. All the children in this category were living with adult hosts, who were either blood or distant relatives. Such adult hosts provided them with various kinds of support, ranging from accommodation, feeding, placement in schools, school items, school fees and pocket money as well as security for their safety at the destinations. For instance, a 17 years old boy (Anabiisi) migrated when he was 14 years old and in Junior High School (JHS) 1, to live with his elder sister and her husband in Accra in order to continue his schooling. The couple had to shoulder all the responsibilities of housing and feeding as well as securing admission for him in a school as his parents in the village in Bongo district could not support him in school. Anabiisi shared his experience in the following.

I left our village when I was in JHS 1. There were few teachers in our school. I don't remember the total number but they were not many. One teacher was teaching about 2 or more subjects. I have been here about 3 years. I came in July 2009. My sister is here with her husband, so they called my father and said I should come here and continue with my education and be helping them with their work. It was my sister who called my father and told him about the continuation of my education. That was the only reason why I came here. I expected that, as here is a city, there are many things you can learn than when you are in our home town. Things like, facilities in the schools and good education. There are more facilities here to learn, so it is better than our place. They have facilities like computers. There were no computers in our school in the village. There are also more teachers here than our place. We have more textbooks here than there. It has helped me a lot. The provision of books, school uniforms and a lot of things. As I said, my parents don't work. They only do small, small farming, so they didn't have the money to buy books for me. My sister and her husband are giving me money to go to school and the teachers here also teach better than there. Here, they give us more assignments than at home. They give us many assignments on Fridays for the weekend but the other days, two assignments a day. There is no electricity in our village, but here in Accra there is electricity, so I think here is better. Sometimes I go to the cafe [internet cafe] but back home, no internet and you don't have a cafe. I go there to find information about my schooling and the topics we learn in class (Interview with Anabiisi in Accra).

It can be realised from the narration of Anabiisi that, migration had a positive impact on his education. However, this would not have been possible without the support from his sister and her husband. Besides inviting him to

migrate, they supported him with money and items he needed to be in school; including school uniform, exercise and textbooks, as well as pocket money to buy food in school. The conditions of schools in Accra are more conducive for learning than those in rural areas from where these children migrate from. Adequacy of teachers and giving many class and home assignments (including weekends), availability of facilities, such as computers and internet service offered Anabiisi more favourable learning opportunities than he would otherwise get if he had not migrated. However, all of these have been possible because of the presence and support of adult relatives and guardians at the destination. Anabiisi, at the time of the study, had completed JHS and was preparing to progress to the SHS. But SHS education presents other forms of challenges for migrant children and their hosts and guardians. This is mostly because pupils are assigned to schools for admission (under the Computerised Selection and Placement System) depending on their performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). As such, the schools in which migrant children are placed may present some challenges to them and their hosts. Anabiisi further explained his desire and circumstances in the following narration.

I have finished JHS 3 and the results are in. I have admission at Fumbisi SHS (in the Upper East Region) but I will not be able to go there. I don't have anybody there to take care of me. It is a boarding school but going there from here is not easy. My father is closer to the place, but he cannot help me. My sister can help, but she is also not near there. She is here in Accra. I am planning to attend a school here. I have not yet got the admission. I don't have anything, so I have to tell them (my sister and her husband) so that they will buy the things I need to go to school. They said I will go this year. My coming here has helped me a lot. I had to go to the internet cafe to check my results when it was released. That will not have been possible if I was in the village (Interview with Anabiisi in Accra)

From this narration, it is apparent that Anabiisi's progress to the SHS is dependent on the support he anticipates from his sister and the husband. Although he had been placed for admission into a SHS at Fumbisi (a village in his home region), it was likely he could not go there because it would be expensive for his hosts if he had to attend school at Fumbisi. More so, his father who lives near the school was unable to meet his financial obligation towards the education of his son. Anabiisi was therefore waiting in anticipation of the efforts of his hosts, to find a school in or near Accra (the destination) where they could sponsor his secondary education as they considered Fumbisi far from Accra and as such, would be expensive for them.

Although Anabiisi attended school while living with his hosts, he also helped them whenever he returned from school, during weekends and school holidays. Therefore, attending school at a distant location such as Fumbisi, would mean loss of his labour in their family business with far reaching implications. For instance, it could affect sales in their family business (as they operated a drinking bar) and thus fall in revenue which could intend influence their ability to support his secondary education. Notwithstanding the fact that the academic year had begun and his colleagues were in school, Anabiisi was still waiting and hoping that his hosts would secure admission for him in a school at a convenient location.

Similarly, Adalooro who was 16 years old at the time of the study migrated from Bongo district to live with her auntie in order to attend school after the death of her mother in 2011. She was in her second year in Accra and in JHS2 and shared her experience in the following.

I am living here with my auntie. She is taking care of me here, but sometimes when I need something that she cannot provide, she will tell my father and he will send it to me. He sends me money so that my auntie can pay my school fees and he also buys books and school uniform for me. My father sometimes sends GH¢30 and sometimes too GH¢100. Apart from my father and auntie, my auntie's friend (a co-tenant) also helps me. When my auntie is not there and I need something, she [auntie's friend] will give me or give me money to go and buy what I need (Interview with Adalooro in Accra).

The responses from Adalooro are similar to those of Anabiisi, as she was also living with adult relatives who were taking care of her in order for her to attend school. Besides her auntie, her father was also supporting in paying her school fees and other related costs that her auntie was unable to afford. Furthermore, other non-related adults (friends and co-tenants of Adalooro's auntie) also supported her in various ways by giving her money and other kinds of support when her auntie was not available to help. Besides hosting, and providing her with basic needs in Accra, Adalooro's auntie was also responsible for securing her admission in a school at the destination.

Securing admission in schools in urban areas in Ghana can be tedious as it involves a difficult, but flexible process. Adalooro was assessed before gaining admission into her current school. Although admission requirements vary, school authorities employ various modes of assessment (written or oral) to place prospective individuals seeking admission privately, into appropriate classes in their schools. However, Adalooro was not asked to write an examination but she was made to read a text in a textbook. She narrated that. *Before they accepted me, I was asked to read a passage. I didn't write exams. I only read and they said it was enough.* She was subsequently admitted into JHS1 and although she had spent only a year in the school in Accra, she seemed to have overcome the challenge of learning the local language used in the school and was hopeful of achieving her dream of becoming a medical doctor. This optimism is in direct contrast with those children who could not continue with their schooling and lost hopes of achieving their dreams. Adaloroo seemed content with the prevailing conducive learning environment in her current school and was thus motivated to learn harder in order to realise her dream. She further narrated her experience in the following.

I am now in JHS 2 and I understand what they are teaching us in school. Sometimes when I first came here, it was a little difficult for me, but now, it is no more a problem for me. I can now speak the Twi (local language taught as a subject) so it is not like at first. I feel better here. When I was at home, they were teaching but here they are teaching us better. Sometimes when you don't understand something here, the teachers will let you come to them when they are free for them to teach you, but it was not like that when I was at home. Sometimes when we have free periods, they will come and teach us, so here is better, because at home some of the teachers were not coming to teach us. I want to be a medical doctor in future. I will learn hard to become a doctor in future. I am happy that I am here. I will finish next year. I want to go to BOGISS when I complete here. I want to go there because of the school fees. My father will pay but he will not get the money for me if I am to attend SHS here in Accra (Interview with Adalooro in Accra).

Adalooro, like other migrant children in her category, see migration as an opportunity for her to be able to realise her dream of becoming a medical doctor. She attributed this to the preparedness of teachers to teach during periods when the children are not engaged in class as well as their willingness to explain things to their students outside the classroom. The attitudes of the teachers appear to be in direct contrast with their counterparts in schools at her place of origin. She explained the situation was better in Accra than it was in her school in her hometown. Adalooro therefore hoped to take advantage of the willingness of the teachers to teach, as well as the more conducive environment, to do well and progress to the SHS. She however (unlike the case of Anabiisi), wants to continue with her SHS education at the Bolgatanga Girls Senior High School (BOGISS) in the Upper East Region (her home region).

BOGISS is a famous girls' secondary school, located in Bolgatanga, the regional capital of the Upper East Region (UER). The wish of Adalooro to study in BOGISS was partly informed by the reason that, her father who she expects to support her secondary education does not have the financial wherewithal to meet the demands of schools in the south, where parents bear the cost of their wards in boarding schools. Secondary school students originating from the northern regions of Ghana do not pay fees as a result of a post-independence policy to bridge the gap in education between the people in the south and those in the north. It is the Central Government that pays tuition, boarding and feeding grants of such students. As Adalooro originates from the north, she will not be required to pay such fees (except miscellaneous fees) if she gained admission into BOGISS. It is therefore not surprising that she intended furthering her SHS education in BOGISS.

Furthermore, two (2) children (1 boy and 1 girl) who were attending schools at the destination (Accra) but were not from the study district were also interviewed. This was necessary because the experiences of such children facilitated deeper understanding of how other children (besides those from Bongo district) accessed schools at their destinations. These children (Julepoku and Ernesafo) were assisted by the Department of Social Welfare in Accra, through the financial sponsorship of an Italian NGO (Ricerca Cooperazione) to access schools in Accra. None of the children from Bongo district who were living in Accra and participated in the study, had support of any kind from either a government agency or a non-governmental organization.

Julepoku (who was 12 years old and in JHS 1 at the time of the study) migrated from Attibie (a small town in the Eastern region) to Accra. She was living (at the time of the interview) with her elder sister who worked as an interior decorator, as both of her parents are dead. Julepoku was fortunate to be assisted by the Department of

Social Welfare (through sponsorship from Ricerca Cooperazione) to attend a well-resourced school where she was optimistic of realizing her dream of becoming an Accountant. She narrated the following.

We (I and my two brothers) were staying with our grandmother and things were hard for us in our hometown at Attibie. We were going to the farm during weekends and sometimes school days, and I didn't like it because it was difficult for me. In the school too, the teachers were not teaching us well and were canning us. My grandmother who lived in Accra before was always telling us that life in Accra was better and that the teachers are teaching well in the schools. So, I wanted to come and see how Accra life is and to also attend the schools where they will teach me well. Here (in Accra) they are teaching us well and the compound is very big, not like in the village. The only thing is that, they are still canning us here when you come to school late or you don't do your homework. So I always do my homework and come to school early, so that they won't cane me, because I fear canning. They organise extra classes for us, so I stay after closing to do my homework and attend the extra classes because we don't have electricity at home. I want to be an Accountant in future, so I am learning hard so that I can pass my BECE exams well and go to the Secondary School and University to learn to become an Accountant (Interview with Julepoku in Accra).

It is obvious from the narration of Julepoku, that her migration to Accra was to attend school but not to work. This was further catalysed by the stories she heard about Accra from her grandmother. Julepoku thus looked happy and more content with the school in Accra than the one in her home village in the Eastern Region. She was confident of doing well at the BECE and to go further to become an Accountant, as her ambition in life. It appears Julepoku is not the only one with positive attitudes towards learning and making good use of the conducive environment in the school. A teacher (Gloria Neequaye of Amassaman JHS) who had been teaching both Primary and JHS classes for 7 years in the school acknowledged (in an interview) the efforts migrant children were making in the school in the following.

It is not only Julepoku who is doing well in class. Others like Isaac Asiamah in JHS 3 is very good. He won a Social Studies textbook for his hard work and dedication. He has improved significantly and was within the first ten (10) top performers in the school this year. Pearl Boateng also did very well in her exams from Primary 6 to JHS 1. She recently represented her house (House 1) in an inter house quiz competition in the school. (Interview with Miss Gloria Neequaye of Amassaman JHS in Accra).

It is worth noting, that Isaac Asiamah and Pearl Boateng were not interviewed because of time constraints and more so, they were not the original target respondents of the study, as they do not come from Bongo district. They were in the category of Julepoku and Ernesafo who migrated from other parts of the country and were schooling in Accra. Nevertheless, Julepoku as other children was concerned with the use of cane as punishment in school. She detested canning at her home village but was confronted with the same practice in Accra. She was thus trying her possible best to avoid being canned by going to school early and also doing her assignment on time. The experience of Julepoku with the use of cane appears to be a form of motivation for her to be punctual in school, learn and do her assignments. Nevertheless, although canning (corporal punishment) is permissible in basic schools in Ghana, it is supposed to be used sparingly and when necessary, prescribed, supervised and logged (recorded in the school's Logbook) by the Head teacher (GES, 2012).

On the other hand, Ernesafo who was 14 years old and in JHS 3 recounted his experiences in the following excerpt.

My father and mother were not staying with us in Konongo. They were here [Accra] and we were staying with our grandmother. But when we came here [Accra] it didn't keep long then our father died through lorry accident. He was a tipper truck driver. So my mother is the one taking care of us, but she is only a petty trader. That is why life is very difficult for us. In this school, the compound is big and the teachers are teaching better than Konongo (our home hometown in Ashanti region). They cane us when we do something wrong. I don't like canning, but I think it is good because it makes me to learn and do all my homework, because I don't want them to cane me. There is no electricity in the house where I stay, but they organise extra classes for us, so I stay here and go home late [6pm] because when I am in the house I cannot learn. I learn only when I am in school. When I write my JHS and pass, then I will go to SSS but I don't know which SSS I will go to. If my results are good and I get a school in Accra, I will be happy but if the computer sends me to another school outside Accra, I will go, because I want to finish school and be an Architect. My brother said that if I want to be and Architect, then I have to go to

the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi (Interview with Ernesafo in Accra).

It is evident from the narration of Ernesafo, that he migrated from Konongo in the Ashanti region where he lived with his grandmother, to join his parents in Accra, but unfortunately lost his father. As such, he was on the same sponsorship as Julepoku, through the Department of Social Welfare. Ernesafo also fears being canned and took advantage of the extra classes and electricity in the school to stay until 6pm, in order to do his assignments. He knew that he had to go to the university in Kumasi to be trained as an Architect, and was thus working hard and willing to attend his secondary education anywhere in the country. Although this study is exploratory and involved few children, the experiences are similar to those of Ackah and Medvedev (2010), that education was the primary motivation for 16.5 percent of adult migrants in Ghana. Similarly, the narrations are in accordance with those of Sward and Rao (2008) in a study on migration and education linkages in India and Bangladesh, that children migrate in order to pursue formal education or vocational training, especially when schools in their localities are perceived to be poor and under resourced.

5.2.2 Positive effects at place of origin

Children who for some reasons, are unable to leave home and are schooling at their places of origin, engage in migration to enable them earn money to be able to continue schooling in their home (origin) communities. This category of children, considered migration as a necessary and helpful component of their schooling. Not only did they see their involvement in migration as an opportunity to earn money, but also as a means to escape the lean season (Tamanja, 2012) which is a prominent feature in the district. Seven (7) children, consisting 5 boys and 2 girls, out of the 35 migrant children who were interviewed belong to this category (see table 1) and were in schools in their communities of origin in Bongo district. This movement is mostly done during the long term school vacation, when the academic year ends and children take few weeks of vacation (usually, from July to the early part of September) before the commencement of the next academic year. This phenomenon is further promoted by the fact that it coincides with the period within the crop cycle when harvesting of crops is not due, but stock of foodstuffs is exhausted. School children on vacation therefore migrate during the school holidays to destinations in the south of the country for menial work; in order to earn some money to enable them meet their school cost and food at home for the next school term. Abena who migrated to Ejisu (near Kumasi) for three months during vacation in July 2011, admitted her involvement in migration helped her to earn GH¢60.00 with which she was able to buy items she needed in school as follows.

I was washing bowls in a chop bar and they paid me GH¢1.00 per day. So I got GH¢60.00 when I was coming home. Some of the people who came to eat gave me coins [tips] after eating. When I bring their change to them, they will say, it is ok, I should keep it. I ate and slept free in my mistress' house, so I was able to save all that I earned. The woman's son is a teacher, so she bought books for us and asked him to teach us during the evenings. It was very good for me because I was earning some money and also taught for free. I will not get that if I stayed at home. When I was leaving, the woman asked me to come again during the next long vacation and assured me that she will even help me to go to SHS when I complete my JHS studies. So as for me I will continue to travel to the south during vacation (Interview with Abena in Bongo district).

It will be difficult for children like Abena to stop migrating, because migration offers them the opportunity to get extra tuition whilst also earning money. Although Abena did not work for 60 days at the daily rate of GH¢1, she returned home with GH¢60 because some customers gave her money (tips) which she added to her savings. It is worth noting that, although giving tips for service rendered is not formal in Ghana, people voluntarily give token sums of money after they have been served in restaurants or chop bars, and Abena seemed to have benefited from such generosity which she admitted in her narration that “*they gave me coins after eating*”. Besides money, some child migrants are lucky to be accommodated and fed by their employers, which in the case of Abena, helped her to save the entire amount of money that she was paid.

Furthermore, Abena and her colleagues received tuition and exercise books through the benevolence of their employer, which she considered very helpful. She admitted that her migration was very helpful as she earned money and at the same time, got free tuition. She would not have got that, if she had not migrated. Although the intention(s) of the employer is/are not known, Abena appeared convinced it was genuine help and expected more from her to further her education to the SHS level. She was therefore poised to migrate again during the next long vacation and could probably stay longer after completing her BECE.

On the other hand, 17-year-old Atambire, completed JHS in June 2012 and had qualifying grades (Aggregate 29) to enter into a SHS but could not get money to pay for admission as well as buy prospectus (the necessary items prescribed by school authorities for prospective applicants to buy and use in school) prescribed by the school. He therefore migrated in order to work to accumulate money and continue his SHS education (Tamanja, 2012). This practice is common in the district, especially among SHS and tertiary school students (not included in this study though, as I could not find any below the age of 18 years) who offer their labour during holidays and semester breaks, to raise money for the next academic term or year. Atambire explained that:

I completed JHS 3 this year and got Aggregate 29. I qualify to go to SHS but cannot get the money to buy items I will need in school and pay miscellaneous fees. That is why I am here to work and get enough money so that I can return to our village and go to school (SHS). I will like to go back home to continue going to school. Like I said, my grades are good so, if I get enough money, I will go back home to attend school there. Schooling is very expensive here in Accra and I don't have anyone to take care of me to attend school at this place. So I will go back home to continue with my education there. I will like to be a medical doctor. My coming here has delayed my schooling because my colleagues are already in school and I should have also been with them in school, but I am here. I want to get enough money and go back to school. So I am here but anytime that I get the money I will go back home and go to school. I go to work here in the morning by 11:00 am. When I get there, I sweep and clean the place. I wash the utensils and all the plates then I set the fire and then begin to roast the meat. When people come to buy I sell to them until we close in the night like 10pm or 12 in the night, during weekends and holidays. Sometimes we close late, when the place is very busy during weekends and festival times. I am not paid a fixed rate. It depends on the market and the sales we make a day. When the market is good, I get GH¢7 but when it is not good then I get GH¢4 a day. I save all the money that I get with my brother [someone from our village] so that when I get enough I will be able to go back home and continue with my schooling. I live here [sleeping place] with my brother who I have come to meet here in Accra. He also stays here with another man who is from Bawku and is the care taker of the house because the owner is abroad. So I don't pay for accommodation. I do not support my family back home now. I wanted to send some money to them but my father said I should save it for my school. So I don't send money. I am saving everything that I get here. I think if I get GH¢1,000 it will be enough for me to go back home to continue schooling. I have so far saved GH¢210 and I will like to save more so that I can have enough money before I go back to our hometown (Interview with Atambire in Accra).

Although Atambire had missed one year of schooling, he was happy to have migrated because it offered him the opportunity to earn some money to enable him continue his education at the SHS level. He had worked for only 3 months selling Khebab (roasted meat) and was able to save GH¢210 and was optimistic of increasing his savings in order to raise the needed money for his SHS education. Besides working about 12 hours a day (from 11am to 10pm during week days and 12 midnights during weekends and festive occasions), Atambire made time (from 7am to 9am) every morning to read his notes and any other reading material (books) available to him. This he said was a means of keeping abreast of his studies as he was poised to enrol in a SHS in his home region during the next academic year. Similar to the experience of Abena, Atambire was able to save his entire daily earnings because he was fed by his employer who also happens to come from the same village as him. The daily wage was not fixed but depended upon daily sales: GH¢7.00 for days that the market was good but GH¢4.00 when less sales were made. Atambire was therefore optimistic of raising his target of GH¢1,000 which he said could enable him continue with his SHS education. It can be inferred therefore, that Atambire will continue to migrate during holidays to fund his SHS education. He therefore considered migration as the panacea to the poverty of his parents and a means to access education. This further supports the argument that migration is not incompatible with children's education and their livelihood (Bourdillon, 2006).

5.3 Mixed effect of child migration on education

Besides the positive and negative effects of migration on children's education, some children who are unable to continue schooling when they migrate often consider apprenticeship as an alternative to schooling. Although there exists formal apprenticeship training in Ghana, migrant children from Bongo district who were on apprenticeship were mainly in the informal sector, as non was in a vocational training institution or had a signed contract between the trainers and apprentices. This category of children included those who either dropped out of school because of migration or completed school (BECE) but could not continue to the next stage as was

articulated by 17 years old Abudu, who migrated to Accra because he could not get the qualifying grades from his BECE to enter a Senior High School (SHS).

I completed JHS 3 in 2009, but my results were not good for me to continue to the SHS. I registered and wrote the exams again in 2010, but I still could not pass. Things are hard here in Accra. I want to go back but I also want to get some money and go and open a provision store at our place. That is why I am still here. I wanted to finish school and become a nurse in future. Right now I am no more in school, so it is no longer in my mind. It is not only the provisions that I will like to be selling. I will like to sit with people who are already in business for them to advise me on the type of business. But I will also like to be buying goats and sheep from Burkina Faso and bring them here [Accra], and then also buy bicycles to go and sell in our home town. I have been helping my master here to sell the animals he brings from our place and then also helping to load the bicycles into the trucks to send home (Interview with Abudu in Accra).

From this narration, Abudu thinks he is incapable of continuing his education after the second trial (rewriting BECE) in 2010, but also admitted that life in Accra is difficult. As such his objective was to save from his meagre earnings to raise a start-up capital for a small scale retail business in general provisions back in his home village (Namoo) in Bongo district.

Besides retailing in provisions, children are opened to other options of doing business and are prepared to learn from adults who are already engaged in such businesses. Abudu explained further, that his dream was to become a nurse but apart from the provisions business objective, he was opened to other business options that could enable him earn money. Abudu's quest for apprenticeship is not structured, but to listen to and observe how people who trade in animals and bicycles ply the trade, so that he could be successful when he ventures into that business. He wanted to learn by observation and through non-binding contractual agreements with the actors in the bicycle and animal trade. Although he called one of such traders his master, there was no formal contractual agreement between them. The choice of trade in bicycles and livestock was informed by the dominance of the business in Namoo. I observed during data collection in Namoo that, bicycles were brought from Accra and transported into neighbouring Burkina Faso (see figure 2) while livestock (mainly goats and sheep) were bought in surrounding villages in Ghana and Burkina Faso, and then transported to Accra and other cities in the south. I had to wait an hour and a half, for Abudu to help load bicycles into a truck before the interview with him in Accra.

Figure 2 A truck load of bicycles from Accra



Source: Field data

On the other hand, a 16-year-old girl (Lamisi) who wanted to complete school and enrol into the Ghana Police Service, but was then on apprenticeship under the guidance of a practicing Hairdresser shared her experience in the following.

When I was in school, I wanted to become a police woman in future, but now, I cannot tell if it can still be possible. If I can get someone to help me, I will go back to school and then when I complete, I will be able to join the police. But if I don't get someone to help me I can no longer go to school....but our elders

say that, "when one door closes another door opens"... So, now I am learning hairdressing, so that I will have my own handwork in the future. I will be passing out soon (next year). If I pass out, I will like to open my shop either here in Accra or at Winneba; where my brothers are. I would have liked to open my shop at home, where my mother is, but there, the people are not many. So I will not get market, but I need money to take care of my mother. Now I am growing, I will be 17 years this December, so I have to take care of myself and my mother. That is why I want to open my shop here, where I can get market and get money, so that I can take care of my mother

and myself (Interview with Lamisi in Accra).

From this narration, Lamisi knew that accessing formal education was no longer possible for her, so she was prepared to focus on apprenticeship. However, she still relied on her brothers and benevolent individuals to help her graduate, as it requires money to pay the trainer. She was also hoping that the brothers will help her establish her own business, and like Abudu and others in her category, she was unable to estimate how much capital was required to start the dream business. Although these children work and save part of their earnings to start their own businesses, they do not know the threshold capital required for such ventures.

Furthermore, Lamisi wished to return to her home village to ply her trade because of her attachment and responsibility towards her mother. However, the fear of low patronage due to few customers for the skill she was learning may prevent her from returning to her home village. She was thus contemplating establishing either in Accra or Winneba (a coastal town near Accra), where the patronage of her skill could be high and where her brothers and other relatives (adult migrant relatives) reside and could be of help.

This category of children see schooling as a missed opportunity and are prepared to focus on apprenticeship, irrespective of its form, as a means to acquire useful skills that they can make a living. Nevertheless, the support and assistance of relatives and adults (both at destination and origin) is still important to enable them complete as well as establish after their training. They therefore regard migration as having both positive and negative effects on their lives as Lamisi observed that “*when one door closes, another door opens*”. Perhaps their inability to continue with schooling opened the door of apprenticeship for them to acquire skills for their livelihoods.

6. Conclusion and recommendation

It is useful to observe from the forgoing discussion, that there is a complex nexus between child migration and education. Whereas some children drop out of school (experiences of Attis and Abudu) others (Anabiisi and Adalooro) are able to access more resourced schools by embarking on migration. Furthermore, some others (Lamisi) do not completely miss education as they are afforded the opportunity to learn trades through apprenticeship when they migrate. Therefore, the nexus is intricate and depends on the individual migrant and the context in which the migration takes place. These findings are consistent with those of Hashim (2007) and Hashim and Thorsen (2011) on migrant children from the Upper East Region. It is therefore prudent to conclude that, although child migration has both positive and negative effects on the education of children, it has mixed effects on children who are unable to continue schooling but pursuing apprenticeship as an alternative.

Therefore, mitigating the negative effects of child migration requires both local and nationwide interventions to minimize the negative effects at the destinations while resolving the push related factors at the places of origin.

The metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs) through the department of social welfare at the places of destinations should work to support migrant children to access schools. This is necessary because poverty has been observed in all the narrations of the children to be the main impediment to the inability of children to attend school both at their places of origin and destination (Ray, 2000; Tzannatos, 2003). This could be through support from NGOs and other partners (as with the case of Enersafo and Julepoku) to help child migrants access schools at their destinations to realise their dreams. As most of the children narrated poverty as the underlying motivation of their migration, efforts at revamping the Veia Irrigation dam in the district and expanding on such investments with the potential of reducing poverty should be embarked upon by the district assembly with support from the regional and national levels will be a step in the right direction. It will also be worthy strengthening vocational and technical training to formalise apprenticeship for children who are unable to pursue education when they migrate. This will ultimately enhance achieving the SDG goal 4 of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all in Ghana.

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